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FIAE Ch. 1,2,3

**Chapter 1**

As the chapter states, “differentiated instruction does not mean we make learning easier for students.” This seems to cover a general oversight about differentiated instruction that many people tend to align themselves with. I’ve witnessed this oversight in today’s educational system quite recently. While MBHS does make the effort of grouping students into classes based upon their proficiency levels in order to make differentiating for teacher’s easier and more organized, it unfortunately fosters some unhealthy practices that include “dumbing down” the curriculum for these “lower-level” students. This is the pitfall that the first chapter seeks to explain and help us avoid. Differentiating instruction is designed to avoid teaching to the “bell-curve” that only allows for continual improvement for students in the classroom that are represented closest to the median of proficiencies. Instead, educators who differentiate appropriately are able to teach on a “J-curve” which fosters continual improvement for all students in the classroom which can only lead to more positive attitudes and expectations surrounding the learning environment. In combination with the use of effective differentiated instruction, the chapter reveals that an educator must also achieve a balance of accountability between themselves and their student’s performances. In this practice we can relate to Goldilocks, who would know that the key is to fall somewhere in the middle where both the student’s and the teacher benefit from an equal distribution of accountability. This way, the students are able to reflect on their mistakes and acquire knowledge and self-identity through being the center of their own learning, and teachers are still responsible for consistent application of differentiated instruction that allows each individual student continual growth.

**Chapter 2**

Around the 6th century CE, the Civil Service Exam revolutionized the bureaucracies of the Sui Dynasty in China. The exam was mostly centered around complete memorization or “mastery” of the 4 ancient Confucian texts. The exam only tested one’s knowledge of the content, not their abilities of application. Apparently it has only taken 1500 years for the educational system to understand that this concept of mastery is a fallacy. As alluded to in this chapter of FIAE, McTighe and Wiggins have it right in their book Understanding by Design that lists 6 facets of true understanding: Explanation, Interpretation, Application, Perspective, Empathy, and Self-Knowledge. In order to achieve true mastery over a given content area, one must be able to portray their understanding using these 6 facets. This idea is fortified in what we have read recently about proper forms of assessment. We assess in different ways during different waypoints in our lessons in order to get a better picture of our individual student’s levels of mastery over the content. Understanding where they are in regards to mastery of the content is essential in planning for the eventual decisive assessments that will either enhance or hinder our schools, us as teachers, and (as is always most important) our students’ futures.

**Chapter 3**

Alas! The truth is revealed and No Child Left Behind is appealed! This third chapter of FIAE explores the understanding that an individual’s level of proficiency, as well as the representation of school-wide success, cannot be accurately depicted by “snap-shot” or single-shot assessment. Unfortunately, as teacher’s struggle to cover a vast curriculum, they can fall short of their goals in differentiating assessment in order to cover all the content in time for an upcoming exam. Through consistent application of differing forms of assessment (pre-assessment and formative assessments), however, students and teachers alike are able to identify what requirements need to be met in order to achieve the overall goal of mastering the content BEFORE the deadline or summative assessment occurs. It is important to be clear about what those end goals are in the beginning, however, or else the process of obtaining proficiency throughout the unit becomes confusing and unclear for the students. How many times have you requested extra help or an extension of a due date on an assignment or test only to be smacked by a remark from your teacher such as: “I cannot allow any extra time on this assignment or test because I am preparing you for the real-world.” This type of response assumes that during the ages of adolescence, it is fair to be held to the same standard as adults. Besides the obvious ignorance in that, the “real world” actually does include extensions of professional projects in order to meet standards of quality in a finished project or product. Similarly, quality education cannot be achieved without consistent monitoring (formative assessment) and effective adjustments to the lesson based on the information gathered (differentiated instruction).